I wake up, the relief of sleep ending abruptly at the sound of my loud, dreaded alarm. I blindly grab at my where my phone is meant to be and solely feel the smoothness of my windowsill. *Damn, it fell off*, I think as I heave myself to the side and attempt to reach the vibrating, loud red phone which I want to pitch through a window. I grab it and quickly poke the "Stop" button, laying back down in my childhood bed and slowly intaking a breath.

My room smells slightly brassy (a word often used in my family to describe when you distinctly smell like the outdoors), the smell lingering from me opening my window for the first time in four years the previous afternoon. Its mid-April, and I'm not where I should be. Where I should be is still in my sorority house in Santa Barbara, hopping out of bed to make myself a bagel before strolling onto my sunny Santa Barbara campus, but my reality is being back in New Orleans, under my parents' roof where the weather has been gloomy and suffocatingly humid.

I lay there, unwilling to get up.

The best part of my day is going to bed, which makes the worst part getting up. Now, I must do it otherwise I'll hear my mom climb up the 26 stairs and across the landing to wake me up on her own. She'll be cheerful, and I'll try to force a smile when I just want to lay here and feel numb for the remainder of the day, ignore my classes on zoom, and not talk to anyone.

But I can't do that. That's not who I am, despite my desperate desire to do so.

Instead, I sit up and swing my legs out of my too warm, and overly colorful Vera Bradley comforter that I picked out when I was thirteen. I look around the room, my eyes lingering on the aggressive teal that covers my walls. Yet, the ugly color is mostly covered by posters, quotes, photos, and artwork from my high school years. *I hate this room, and I want to go home*, but no, I *was* home, so it simply did not make sense to think that.

The thought, *I hate this room,* circles back. Another voice pipes up in my mind: *so do something about it*. Struck by this thought, I made fast work, walking around and pulling old posters and photos off the wall, watching them flutter to the ground. The tape I slowly peeled off the walls stuck to my fingers as I angrily balled it up to throw away, the sharp edges not enough to cause legitimate pain but instead a vague annoyance.

Every piece of paper I took off the wall made my anger spike even more. *This is so childish. Why did I ever like this stuff?* As I took down the remnants of who I was as a high schooler, the feelings of sadness washed over me. It felt like I was desecrating something meaningful by taking everything down, but I couldn't bear to look at the hopeful, optimistic person I was before Covid hit.

Then, I was a star student, outgoing, and happy. Now, I had no motivation to work (although forced myself to do it nonetheless), felt stressed, anxious, and empty. As I took down a poem I had annotated, I felt the thinness of the photocopy. The words on the page that I had been so tied to seem terribly unimportant now. I take a step back and look at the havoc I have wreaked. I was careful not to rip these memories scattered on the floor, instead I carefully picked

up every piece of paper, neatly stacked it and squirreled it away in a folder buried beneath clothing I haven't worn in years.

I look around once again, the walls much emptier than fifteen minutes prior, feeling terribly uncomfortable as a bead of sweat dripping down my back. I walked to my door and turned it the handle, the cool metal a welcome relief. I open the door and let the light of my house flood in and overtake me.